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both Mani and the early Gnostics. Starting from this source Mani's movement gradually took on a distinctiveness derived from the personality of its founder and from the syncretistic life of its environment as it came in contact with both Christianity and paganism.

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### RECENT INTERPRETATIONS OF NEOPLATONISM

Every valuable addition to the interpretation of Neoplatonism is incidentally an aid to the study of church history. By the third century Christianity had entered very substantially upon the task of making itself a vehicle of culture, and in Neoplatonism it found a vigorous rival as well as an important source of inspiration and guidance in its own endeavor. The debt of successive generations of Christians to their Neoplatonic predecessors is today a widely recognized fact, but to estimate the actual extent and nature of this obligation requires special familiarity with that perplexing and elusive system of philosophy founded by Plotinus. Two recent discussions, one by Thomas Whittaker and the other by William Ralph Inge, are distinct contributions toward a better understanding of this subject.

Whittaker's *Neoplatonists*,<sup>1</sup> which now appears in a second edition, has commonly been cited as a standard work ever since its first publication in 1901. So far as the main body of the book is concerned the new edition is scarcely more than a reprint of the old, but in a supplement of eighty-four pages the author discusses separately the commentaries of Proclus. Whether this formal arrangement is a happy one may be questioned. In an earlier part of the book a chapter is given to "The Athenian School," of which Proclus is of course the most distinguished representative. A recasting of this chapter to include a thorough treatment of both the views and the writings of Proclus would seem to have been the more desirable method of procedure. Then a reader would have been more adequately prepared to appreciate the succeeding discussion on the influence of Neoplatonism and the concluding summary of the final chapter.

A few pages of the Appendix which deal with Gnosticism have been substantially re-written to conform to the views of Reitzenstein

<sup>1</sup> *The Neoplatonists: A Study in the History of Hellenism*. By Thomas Whittaker. Second edition, with a supplement on the commentaries of Proclus. Cambridge: University Press, 1918. xvi+318 pages. 12s.

regarding the significance of Egyptian elements in the origin of the movement. But Reitzenstein's theory of the genesis of Gnosticism is hardly so well established that readers can entirely dispense with references to other views held by such modern scholars as Bousset and De Faye.

Of the outstanding merits already evident in the first edition of Whittaker's book little at this date needs to be said. The author is sufficiently sympathetic with the Neoplatonists to be able to depict their views intelligently, and at the same time he is sufficiently independent to insure a thoroughly objective interpretation of his data. The relative brevity of his book is another distinct merit. Instead of presenting an elaborate exposition of the whole subject, discussion centers about those items which best indicate the originality and historical importance of Neoplatonism. Strictly speaking, Whittaker does not aim to furnish a comprehensive history of the school, but is content to provide a concise exposition of the teaching of Plotinus with enough attention given to his historical antecedents and to the work of his successors to make intelligible the main outlines of the school's character and influence.

Dean Inge, of St. Paul's in London, Gifford lecturer for 1917-18, chose as his subject the philosophy of Plotinus.<sup>1</sup> Professing himself to be not merely a student and critic of Plotinus but his actual disciple, our author frequently displays the zeal of the ardent advocate rather than the calm analytical temper of the sober judge. Nevertheless he has made himself thoroughly familiar with the writings of his hero and has produced one of the most elaborate works ever composed to expound their content.

The opening lecture is a plea for the fundamental position of mysticism in religion, and in the realm of mysticism Plotinus is declared to have no equal in power and insight and spiritual penetration. He represents the climax of Platonism in the ancient world, and modern Christianity's future welfare is thought to depend for its safety upon a renewal of that alliance with Neoplatonism which began to exhibit itself in pronounced fashion as early as the time of Augustine. To state the point in the author's own language, "for us the whole heritage of the past is at stake together; we cannot preserve Platonism without Christianity, nor Christianity without Platonism, nor civilization without both."

<sup>1</sup> *The Philosophy of Plotinus*. By William Ralph Inge. In two volumes. New York: Longmans, 1918. xvi+270 and xii+253 pages. \$9.00.

Two lectures are devoted to a survey of conditions in the Mediterranean world of Plotinus' day and two others give an account of his forerunners. The cradle of Neoplatonism is found to have been not Athens but Alexandria, where Orientals and Occidentals freely mingled, yet the system of Plotinus is held to have been an almost completely pure revival of Platonism. The suggestion that mystical tendencies cherished by the oriental cults may have contributed features to Neoplatonism is emphatically rejected. Successive chapters deal at length with the characteristic Plotinian notions regarding the world of sense, the soul and its immortality, the intelligible world—or the "spiritual" world, as this writer terms it—the absolute, ethics, religion, and aesthetics.

Dean Inge has accomplished the somewhat unusual feat of writing interestingly about even the most abstruse phases of Neoplatonism. He has also written with abundant knowledge at his command and with a personal interest in his subject that made him capable of appreciating many an obscure color that would have escaped a less admiring observer. At the same time his desire to make the third-century Plotinus the model exponent of a twentieth-century idealism renders it somewhat difficult for a reader to maintain an undistorted historical perspective. The value of Plotinus as an interpreter of life's problems in the Mediterranean world of the third century is one thing; his worth as a guide for the solution of the problems of twentieth-century civilization in a very different world is quite another matter. This, however, is a distinction which seems never to have been specifically made by Dean Inge. But some such historical discrimination would seem necessary to a scientifically valid estimate of Neoplatonism as a whole and of Plotinus in particular.

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### A HISTORY OF FOREIGN MISSIONS

A compact volume by the scholarly president of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions<sup>1</sup> represents two interesting and highly significant movements in the field of missions. The first is seen in the form of the work, a handbook which may serve as a text in college or university classes or in more advanced church study groups. That such a book could be published is evidence of a conviction that

<sup>1</sup> *The Spread of Christianity in the Modern World*. "Handbooks of Ethics and Religion." By Edward Caldwell Moore. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1919. xi+352 pages. \$2.00.